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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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It’s been a great first week of vacation. Although a rare bout with allergies has taken me down a notch or two, the weather has more than made up for it. No humidity nor high temperatures all week - perfect. The week started off by spending some time with some old friends, and seeing one of them getting married. I don’t get to see these guys much these days, so something like this was really great. Family and friends - it doesn’t get any better. Well, maybe one thing - my wife and I celebrated our 21st anniversary this past week. I guess we’re officially "legal" now!

Until next time...

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Clogged Up Game Released

GUILDFORD, UK -- August 21st 2005 - Reservoir Gods are proud to announce the release of their latest game for Atari Platforms: "Clogged Up".

"Clogged Up" is a brain challenging escape-em-up. It can be played as a single player game or you can compete with a friend in multiplayer battles.

With graphics from Sh3, Sarah & Exocet as well as nine spanking SID tunes from MSG, "Clogged Up" is a treat for the eyes and ears.

"Clogged Up" runs on all Atari ST based machines from the humble STFM to the CT60, where extra hardware is detected it uses it.

Boasting 300 different levels set over seven unique worlds, "Clogged Up" will keep you glued to your Atari until the clogs come home. "Clogged Up" is available for download at http://www.reservoir-gods.com

ABOUT RESERVOIR GODS: Formed in 1994, Reservoir Gods have been responsible for a slew of titles for Atari machines. From puzzle games "Tautology", "SkyFall" & "Static" through to arcade games "Double Bobble 2000", "Chu Chu Rocket" & "SuperFly". Their demos include "Grimey", "Hallucinations" & "Mind Rewind". They also produced the art package "GodPaint", the diskmag

"Maggie" & emulators for GameBoy & NES.

URL: http://www.reservoir-gods.com/

GFA-Basic Editor v1.20 Released

Lonny Pursell has announced:

GFA-Basic Editor v1.20 released

The most important new feature in this release is the direct support for RUN! Software's new RUN!Only interpreter. The instant satisfaction you got from hitting the 'Run' button is back.

Many other new features and corrections, too many to list here. Please see the documentation for details.

URL: http://www.bright.net/~gfabasic/html/gfa_apps.htm

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. It's been another nice, cool week here in the northeast. Cool, dry weather is kind of rare at this time of the year, and any time-out from heat and humidity is a welcomed thing.

I really don't have a lot to say this week, so we're going to get right at the news and stuff, but I thought I'd brighten your week by telling you that our weather has been nice. Hey, what're friends for? <grin>

Now, temperature and humidity are very relative things. What's hot for southern New England would be a walk in the park for El Paso, and our high humidity would probably be just an average day down in bayou country. But y'know what? I don't live in either of those places, so I really don't care! <grin>

You can probably tell what kind of mood I'm in right now, and it's probably best that I don't have much to say. So let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Andrew Summers asks for help with his 1040's floppy drive:

"I was loading a game last night and my 1040ST crashed in the middle of loading. When I rebooted it, it would no longer access any disk. It behaves normally on reboot in that it seeks a disk if none is inserted, but if one is inserted it quickly goes to the green desktop exactly as if it had a blank formatted disk inserted. It views every disk as a blank disk.

I have swapped the drive, and it isn't the drive, so it must be on the system board.

Any ideas? worth fixing? I hate to toss it, as it is barely used in mint condition, rubber feet and all, no discoloration etc."

Edward Baiz asks Andy:

"Hmmmm... Have you tried opening up the ST and pushing down all of the chips and then trying it again? That has solved many problems for me from time to time."

Ronald Hall adds:

"Personally, I feel that *any* Atari is worth fixing! <grin>

Seriously though, have you tried the time honored tradition of taking all connecting cables loose from the ST, raising it about 6-12 inches and dropping it on a hard surface? If you do that, and it works, its probably chip creep. The chips will "creep" out of their sockets sometimes, due to heat expansion/contraction, etc, etc,..

If it does work, then you'd probably want to disassemble the ST and check all your socketed chips, connections.

If it doesn't work I guess I'd swap out cables to see if one went bad. Hope something here helps.

PS If you do decide to toss it out, e-mail me for my address! <smile>"

'Geek' interjects:

"Yikes, 6-12 inches? That could seriously break it. The standard is actually 4" in the 'Atari 4 inch drop'!"

Coda tells Geek:

"Well even that is too high. It used to be called 'The 2" drop' !!!"

Andrew takes all of this in, tries it out, and tells everyone:

"You guys are really smart. the 2-4" drop solved everything!"

Ronald explains the finer points of 'The Atari Drop':

"I forgot to say, start at 2", then when that doesn't fix it, work your way up to 12", in 4" increments. <big grin>

Glad you got it working, but you do know that means you will sooner or later need to take it apart and give the socketed chips a good reseating, right?"

Derryck Croker adds:

"You know the saying, the user knows to kick it to make it work - the engineer knows WHERE to kick it to make it work, and the designer knows WHY it works when you kick it."

Jim DeClercq posts this about working to rebuild his MiNT setup:

"My MiNT installation has gone belly up enough times for me to have learned how to refill it quickly, but the last two times it died, I checked something I had never checked before. My boot drive had some lost sectors. Used Discus, could use ICD Cleanup or Diamond Edge or some other programs to find and fix this. The interesting thing was that the lost sectors had the same content, log files from two programs, and two chunks of binary.

It may be possible for a damaged boot drive to munge the MiNT drive. If enough of the crowd of MiNT users who have to back up and start over will be so kind as to investigate their boot drive when MiNT gets damaged, someone may get to the bottom of this yet.

BTW, CD backups work fine. Writing at 4X speed on my TT can be done only by disabling the MiNT.CNF file and booting into single tasking MiNT. Otherwise, I will get a disk error at exactly the point, and make a batch of coasters."

Edward Baiz tells Jim:

"Same for me. I hadn’t booted it up for a while and when I did I got a load of errors. Also I noticed the Mint.Cnf file was messed. I had to copy in my backup in order to try it again. I am going to try and get it back by using the EasyMint installation. I just want to format my hard drive and I will copy over my files that I had backed up onto a CD.

Just how are you backing up Mint onto a CD?"

Jim tells Edward:

"It takes two CDs. Usr share is one CD, everything else fits on the other. Extendos, CDISO, set for Unix and MiNT compatibility. The "name changes" work themselves out in the end, from an unadvertised file that puts them back. Nothing much to it other than not trying to record too fast, which will cause a write error at the same point on every disk.

File selector for this is Boxkite. The n_aes file selector does not seem to cooperate at selecting what to back up. Is that an answer?"

Edward asks Jim:

"Have you put the information from the CD’s onto the hard drive and have everything go ok?"

Jim replies:

"One small correction. My setup uses three CDs, and one is for all the rest of the usr files.

Have I put them back? Yes, three times, one drive failure and two mysterious events. For this, I would suggest the very latest version of Teradesk, which may be working for this purpose perfectly by now. It takes very big chunks of data to copy, and will run unattended. This takes a while.

Prior versions of Teradesk either missed the permission bits, or the program flag, so I wound up using something else for the four binary folders. I have not tried the latest, but the history file is encouraging. Anyway, make sure your binaries are executable, and your wtmp files are writeable."

Jo Even Skarstein asks Jim:

"Do you happen to use MagiC with boot-logging enabled?? This messed up my TT really good once, it overwrote mint.prg and much of the contents in c:/mint/ with log messages."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli tells Jo Even:

"It happened to me many times (MagiC! 6.20) before I decided to move the log to another partition. I think (don’t remember) it was due to the boot selector I was using at the moment (X-Boot, not to mention it). No problem anymore since I’ve been using Menu_6 - not to say I kept the log file on the alternate partition however."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. I know it’s short, but I’ll try and make it up to you next time around. See ya next week, same time, same station. ’Till then, keep your ears open so you’ll hear what they’re saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Atari’s Spring Lineup!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Metal Gear Solid 3!
  Halo Goes Hollywood!
  And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Atari Advances Its Spring 2006 Lineup With ’TimeShift’ for Xbox 360

Atari, Inc. announced that its upcoming groundbreaking action game TimeShift will ship next spring for the Xbox 360(TM) video game and entertainment system from Microsoft. Currently in development by Saber Interactive, TimeShift is an original first-person shooter offering unprecedented time-control elements that allow players to completely manipulate the flow of time throughout the duration of the game.

"TimeShift is a perfect title for the Xbox 360," said Marc Metis, Senior Vice President, Marketing at Atari. "Powered by Saber Interactive’s superior Saber3D engine, TimeShift will take full advantage of the power and functionality of the Xbox 360, especially Xbox Live."

Based in the near future, TimeShift tells the story of renowned test pilot Colonel Michael Swift, who has been tapped by the US Government to test two of the most significant inventions of the century - a time-control device called the Quantum Suit and a time machine called the Chronomicon. Swift is briefly sent back in time to 1911 to plant an experimental probe. Upon his return to the present, the world has changed beyond all recognition, and his knowledge of this timeshift has made him an enemy of the state. Swift is now both on the run and on a mission to set time straight once again and the world’s very existence rests in his hands.

TimeShift’s unprecedented technology empowers gamers with the ability to slow, stop, and reverse the flow of time around them, while remaining completely unaffected. These first-time ever complex time control scenarios are an integral part of gameplay, and lead TimeShift to take first-person action games in an entirely new direction.

Saber Interactive’s proprietary Saber3D game engine includes groundbreaking graphics technology, such as normal mapping to create highly detailed textures and characters, as well as advanced parallax lighting, allowing for realistic depth to environmental textures. The game engine also incorporates futuristic physics technology for in-game objects and characters.

TimeShift will be released in spring 2006 for both Xbox 360 and the Windows platform and for Xbox in summer 2006.

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence Sneaks Online on Playstation 2

Hideo Kojima, director and creator of Konami of Europe’s forthcoming Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence, has announced details of the PlayStation 2 title’s incredible online modes.

Kojima will use 2005’s Games Convention event - Europe’s largest digital

entertainment expo in Leipzig, Germany - to outline his plans to take the jungle-based combat of Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence online. For the PAL release, Kojima will offer a number of 'Versus' modes designed to allow gamers to compete against other fans via the PlayStation 2 network, marking the first time the best-selling series has entered the online area.

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence is a massively enhanced version of March's Snake Eater title. A new camera system has been incorporated allowing players to view the action from virtually any angle, and also features versions of the original Metal Gear and Metal Gear 2 titles as originally created for the now defunct MSX2 format, chronicling the genesis of Metal Gear and available for the first time since their original release.

It is the new online modes that push Subsistence to its limits, however. Kojima has devised 'Sneaking Missions', 'Capture Missions', 'Rescue Missions', 'Death Matches' and 'Team Death Matches', which will allow up to eight players to battle against each other in real-time. These missions will be set within key locations from Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater, and in new areas such as Small Forest, the Kill House and the Abolition Factory.

Each mode will feature up to five different mission styles settings to create varied parameters of play. For example in 'Death Matches' felled players are returned to play instantaneously after being killed, with the winner being the player with the most kills. Having selected which team to represents from Ocelot Unit, GRU or KGB, the action will offer the user full use of the control system seen in the main game, with he CQC (Close Quarters Combat) and weapons elements of Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater all faithfully used. Similarly, players who accrue the best stats will be able to select major characters from the game to control, including Ocelot.

"Finally it is possible to battle with players from around the world online at Metal Gear Solid from the comfort of your own home," said Hideo Kojima. "For the online mode, the essence of Metal Gear Solid is retained, with additions of various online rules and original stages. With the continued growth of the culture of Metal Gear Solid, this new online addition, I believe will bring a new way to enjoy and experience the world. I hope fans will look forward to experiencing it."

Microsoft Signs Film Deal for "Halo" Video Games

Microsoft Corp. has signed a deal with two film studios to make a movie based on its popular space-based video game series "Halo," a spokesman for Universal Pictures said on Wednesday.

Universal and Twentieth Century Fox agreed to pay Microsoft $5 million plus a percentage of ticket sales. The total price being paid is capped at 10 percent of the domestic box office.

The deal ends months of speculation over which studio would win the right to make a "Halo" film, which came to Hollywood last spring highly-touted by Microsoft and its representatives at Creative Artists Agency. Messengers delivered a script to the studios wearing costumes and toting laser guns.

But several studios balked at an initially high asking price, which at the time published reports pegged at $15 million plus 15 percent of the initial gross box office.

Under terms of the final agreement, Universal will oversee the film’s production and domestic distribution, while Fox will handle international distribution.

Universal spokesman Paul Pflug said the studios are aiming for a summer 2007 release of a movie based on "Halo" and "Halo 2," a science fiction series about an alien-fighting warrior named Master Chief.

Microsoft spokesman Carlos de Leon declined to comment on the terms of the movie deal as well as on speculation that the software giant would launch its "Halo 3" game title alongside the movie.

"We haven’t made any announcement on the launch of ’Halo 3’," he said.

Video Games Linked to Aggression in Boys

Most studies done on violence and video games support the conclusion that violent video games can increase aggressive behavior in children and adolescents, especially boys, researchers said on Friday.

An analysis of 20 years of research shows the effects can be both immediate and long-lasting.

"The majority of the studies would suggest there are effects," said Jessica Nicoll of Saint Leo University in Saint Leo, Florida, who worked on the study.

One study showed that children who played a violent game for less than 10 minutes and then took a mood assessment test rated themselves with aggressive traits and aggressive actions shortly after playing.

Teachers of 600 8th and 9th graders, aged 13 to 15, said children who spent more time playing violent video games were more hostile than other children and more likely to argue with authority figures and other students.

The findings, presented at an annual meeting of American Psychological Association, prompted the group to adopt a resolution recommending that all violence be reduced in video games and interactive media marketed to children and youth.

"Additionally, the APA also encourages parents, educators and health care providers to help youth make more informed choices about which games to play," the Association said in a statement.

Video games set a bad example and may be particularly influential because a player takes on the roles of heroes and villains, violent and otherwise, the APA said.

Perpetrators of violence go unpunished 73 percent of the time in all violent scenes, the group said. "Showing violent acts without consequences teach youth that violence is an effective means of resolving conflict," said psychologist Elizabeth Carll, who helps direct the group’s Committee on Violence in Video Games and Interactive Media.

Nicoll said in an interview that "only a handful" of the studies she and colleagues examined found no connection between violence and violent video

games.

The findings are similar to those seen for violent television shows. Joaquim Ferreira of the University of Coimbra in Portugal and colleagues studied more than 800 youngsters aged from 9 to 14 and found the biggest factor linking television violence and actual aggression was the child's understanding of the violence.

"It is the way you perceive the violence and how you deal with the kids and help them understand reality," Ferreira, who also presented his findings to the APA meeting, said in an interview.

Parents can sit with children and explain cartoons or television shows to them - something the APA and other groups recommend doing. But this is more difficult to do with video games, Ferreira said.

"You are part of the thing," he said. "You get involved in the violence because you are doing it."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Spyware Web Sites Quadruple in Past Year

The number of Web sites distributing malicious software has quadrupled in the last year to more than 300,000, as the spyware problem continues to fester on the Internet, according to an upcoming report from Webroot, an antispyware software company.

Webroot Software Inc.'s State of Spyware Report for the second quarter of 2005, claims that 80 percent of enterprise computers are infected with some kind of adware or spyware. Rates of infections of malicious programs such as Trojan horse and keylogging software did not decrease between the first and second quarter, despite more awareness of the danger of spyware.

The report comes as the online criminal groups that are responsible for spyware switch from pay-per-click advertising to identity theft as a way to profit from their activities, said Richard Stiennon, vice president of threat research at Webroot.

The State of Spyware Report presents the results of spyware scans of almost 60,000 systems at 20,000 companies, Webroot said.

The average number of spyware infections on computers increased almost 20 percent to 27 per machine since the last quarter, despite more public awareness of the spyware problem and the availability of a number of new tools for detecting and removing spyware from infected computers, Stiennon said.

The reason may be that spyware makers are wising up to detection tools such

as Microsoft Corp.’s Antispyware and Webroot’s Spy Sweeper, Stiennon said.

Evidence collected by Webroot researchers indicates that spyware authors are testing their creations against those programs and adopting techniques from stealthy programs known as "root kits" to avoid detection, he said.

Online scam artists are switching their focus from installing advertising software that generates revenue from pop-up ads and pay-per-click advertising to spyware and remote-system monitoring tools that are used to steal identities, Stiennon said.

The spyware can generate far higher revenue, per install, for the online criminals, he said.

"We’re seeing adware-type spyware evolving into system monitoring spyware," he said.

Software from mainstream adware vendors was actually less prevalent on systems scanned by Webroot, according to Webroot’s data. That may indicate that improved installation practices and end-user license agreements from mainstream adware companies are having an affect. However, the decline in legal adware is offset by the continued strength of malicious spyware such as keyloggers and Trojan horse programs, Webroot.

Cool Web Search, a ubiquitous form of spyware, was found on about 8 percent of the machines Webroot scanned in the second quarter, and keyloggers were on about 7 percent of all machines-comparable to the rates of infection last quarter, Stiennon said.

IT administrators should actively scan and monitor their network hosts for spyware infections. They should also avoid complacency about the problem, Stiennon said.

Keyloggers, Trojans and other spyware are much more common today than they were five years ago. However, they still pose a serious security risk to enterprises and should be taken seriously.

"I think the data loss news that is hitting us is an indicator of how serious this problem is," Stiennon said.

A new enterprise version of Spy Sweeper, which is being released Monday, will be able to detect and remove sophisticated spyware that changes the configuration of Windows systems and interacts with the operating system at a low level, said Brian Kellner, vice president of enterprise products at Webroot.

Spy Sweeper Enterprise 2.5 has a new spyware scanning engine and CRT (Comprehensive Removal Technology) that can remove even tricky spyware programs such as Look2Me and Cool Web Search variants without harming Windows systems, Kellner said.

Spy Sweeper Enterprise can also scan systems more quickly, uses smaller spyware definition files, and has a Web-based management dashboard with new reporting features and the ability to control and configure Spy Sweeper clients across an enterprise network, he said.

Anti-porn Spam Laws to Shield Kids Backfire

Laws in two states to shield children from objectionable e-mail are having a chilling effect on nearly everyone but the spammers they were intended for.

The laws in Michigan and Utah create e-mail registries to prevent children from viewing adult-oriented messages. But the laws, both barely a month old, threaten to disrupt businesses nationwide, marketers and legal experts say.

Legitimate e-mail marketers are weighing the legal and financial risks of doing business in the two states. Small and midsize companies are anticipating crushing fines. And legal experts are alarmed by the potential impact on free speech and e-mail taxation.

Spammers, ironically, may be tempted to send more e-mail to those states to gain valid e-mail addresses.

"Everyone is being impacted but the spammers," says Kurt Opsahl, a staff attorney at Electronic Frontier Foundation, a non-profit civil-liberties group.

The laws' quandary illustrates the difficulty in reducing unwanted commercial e-mail, which has flourished despite a federal anti-spam law and high-profile lawsuits against spammers. About 72% of e-mail is spam, up from 68% a year ago, says e-mail security company IronPort Systems.

Many of the largest bulk e-mailers use sophisticated software to cover their tracks, often from operations overseas. "Most spammers will ignore the state laws, as they have all others," says Parry Aftab, an attorney who specializes in Internet privacy and security.

Still, other states are considering similar laws, says Michigan Sen. Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, who has fielded calls from state lawmakers.

"Legislators are trying to tell marketers they can't advertise sex, alcohol and tobacco to youngsters online just as they can't on TV or in print," says Anne Mitchell, CEO of the Institute for Spam and Internet Public Policy, a group that works with public and private sectors.

Under the new laws, parents would register their kids' e-mail addresses and birth dates with the state. The registries also include instant-messaging addresses, cell phone and pager numbers.

Businesses face steep fines if they fail to remove from their lists any e-mail addresses that parents submit. The Michigan law carries fines of up to $5,000 per message and $250,000 per day.

That's bad news to legitimate e-mail marketers, who dread the costs and onerous task of scrubbing their lists.

"The costs are so prohibitive, we've recommended clients consider dropping" e-mail marketing campaigns in Utah and Michigan, says Derek Harding, CEO of Innovyx, which runs e-mail marketing campaigns for Sony and Toyota.

Children could inadvertently be endangered by the laws. Opsahl and others say many spammers will bombard both states with e-mail and, based on automated e-mail warnings, discover valid addresses. Aftab wonders if spammers and pedophiles will hack into large databases of children.

Bishop concedes the law won’t stop spam, but it will put a damper on unwanted e-mail aimed at kids and give the state the authority to punish violators. "We need to work out nuances in the law to make sure we don’t step on toes of legitimate marketers," he says.

Suspected Computer Worm Authors Arrested

Authorities in Morocco and Turkey have arrested two men for unleashing computer worms that disrupted networks across the United States last week, the FBI said on Friday.

Farid Essebar, 18, of Morocco, and Atilla Ekici, 21, of Turkey, are believed to have been responsible for the Zotob worm that hit the Internet less than two weeks ago, along with predecessors called Rbot and Mytob released earlier, the FBI said.

Zotob caused computer outages at more than 100 U.S. companies, including major media outlets like CNN and The New York Times, but it did not create widespread havoc along the lines of previous malicious software programs like SQL Slammer and MyDoom.

Close teamwork among the FBI, Microsoft Corp. and authorities in Morocco and Turkey was essential to the case, said FBI Cyber Division Assistant Director Louis Reigel.

"This case happened very quickly," Reigel said on a conference call. "Had we not had those entities involved in this investigation, I suspect it would still be ongoing today."

Reigel said Essebar wrote the malicious code and provided it to Ekici for a fee.

The two men will face prosecution in their native countries and FBI officials will provide evidence, he said.

Zotob targeted a recently discovered flaw in the Plug and Play feature of Microsoft’s Windows 2000 operating system. Newer versions of the software were not affected.

Users who heeded a prior warning from Microsoft and updated their systems were not victimized by the worms, but those who did not keep their systems up to date could have their computers taken over by remote servers or see them shut down and start back up repeatedly.

Microsoft general counsel Brad Smith said the worms had a limited impact because more consumers were keeping their software up to date and using firewalls and anti-virus software.

The software industry was taking threats more seriously as well, he said.

Microsoft’s team of 50 investigators was able to analyze the worms and find out where they were coming from, he said. The team began work on the case in March after the release of Mytob, but Zytob provided the evidence to track them down, he said.

"We have important work ahead of us to strengthen computer security but we’ve also come a long ways in a short time, and the fact that we were able

to see these arrests in less than two weeks and see them halfway around the world really drives that point home," Smith said.

Microsoft to Expand Anti-Phishing Tool

Microsoft Corp. will soon make available to the general public a tool for warning users about "phishing" scams that could lead to identity theft.

Currently, such a tool comes only with the Internet Explorer 7 browser, which is available in tests only to a select group of developers.

But within a few weeks, Microsoft will incorporate it into a toolbar for older versions of IE. While still officially a test, the anti-phishing tool will be available to anyone running the Windows XP operating system with the Service Pack 2 security upgrade from last summer.

The company will eventually make it available to older Windows systems, too.

The tool was built to address scammers who try to trick people into revealing passwords by posing as legitimate banking or e-commerce site. When an unfamiliar site is encountered, users have the option of passing that address to Microsoft to check against a database of known phishing sites. A "red" warning page appears when there’s a match.

Even when there isn’t a match, the tool will display a pop-up "yellow" warning when it sees telltale signs of phishing, such as the lack of SSL encryption when submitting passwords.

Minnesota Spammer Indicted on Pharmacy Charges

A Minnesota man considered one of the world’s most prolific e-mail spammers was indicted on more than a dozen federal charges related to the operation of his business, Xpress Pharmacy Direct.

The indictment against Christopher William Smith, 25, was unsealed Wednesday after he was arrested at his home in Prior Lake. Dr. Philip Mach, 47, of Franklin Park, N.J., and Bruce Jordan Lieberman, 45, from Farmingdale, N.Y., were also charged in the indictment, federal prosecutors said.

The grand jury alleged that Smith provided prescription drugs without making sure customers had a valid prescription. The orders were obtained through spam e-mails, Internet sites and telemarketing.

The indictment contains various counts of conspiracy to dispense controlled substances, wire fraud, money laundering, distributing controlled substances and introducing misbranded drugs into interstate commerce.

Xpress Pharmacy generated millions of dollars. The indictment claims that from March 2004 to May 2005 the operation generated sales of more than $20 million from medications containing a single addictive painkiller, hydrocodone.

Smith appeared Wednesday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Janie Mayeron, who ordered him held without bond. An arraignment and detention hearing was scheduled for Friday.

Smith's attorney, Joe Friedberg, did not return a telephone call seeking comment.

The Spamhaus Project, an international anti-spam organization based in the United Kingdom, considered Smith one of the world's worst offenders.

In May, a federal judge shut down Xpress Pharmacy and appointed a receiver to take control of the business' assets. Federal authorities seized $1.8 million in luxury cars, two homes and $1.3 million in cash.

Prosecutors allege Smith had Mach issue about 72,000 prescriptions from July 2004 to about May 2005. Mach is registered to practice medicine in New Jersey, but allegedly wrote prescriptions for patients throughout the United States and without having any contact with patients or with their primary care doctors.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Mach was represented by Bruce Levy of New Jersey. A call to his office was not immediately returned Wednesday.

Lieberman, Smith's former accountant, was accused of helping Smith hide the origin of money earned from the prescription drug business. Lieberman also allegedly helped Smith process credit cards.

Marvin Zevin, Lieberman's attorney, declined to comment until his client had made his first court appearance.

Google's 'Intelligent' Desktop 2

Google Inc. yesterday released new software that collects information based on a computer user's behavior and displays updates of news, weather, Web sites and unopened e-mail messages on a toolbar on the side of the screen.

The test product, called Google Desktop 2, is the second incarnation of a program launched last fall. By using Google's trademark search software, it aims to be a more personalized version of products such as Apple Computer Inc.'s Dashboard and Yahoo Inc.'s Konfabulator, programs that deliver icons to the screen and keep photo, alarm clock, scheduling, music, currency converters and news applications running while the computer is in use.

"It functions as an intelligent Web agent," said Nikhil Bhatla, Google Desktop product manager. The software indexes a Microsoft Windows user's previous Web searches, pages visited and photos saved, and automatically customizes the toolbar to reflect those preferences.

At least initially, the software won't generate money for Mountain View, Calif.-based Google, which does not currently plan to sell advertisements on Desktop 2, according to Bhatla.

But it gives Google a higher profile on the computer monitor, and that in turn gives the company potentially greater control over the user's behavior, said Greg Sterling, an analyst with the Kelsey Group, a firm that researches the directory and local media business.

"They want to make themselves an entry point for all of your needs," he said. If users find Desktop 2 useful and download it in large numbers, for example, it may begin to compete with the browser as an entry point into the Web, siphoning traffic away from Microsoft Corp.'s popular Internet Explorer.

If a user has searched for weather in Arlington, for instance, the Desktop toolbar will show the day's weather and the next-day forecast. If the user checked up on a stock the previous day, Desktop will display the latest trading price of that stock, updated every minute. News clips from frequented sites are updated every 10 minutes. Blog clips are updated every 30 minutes. At the bottom of the toolbar is a tool that allows the user to search content on the computer, as well as the Web.

Windows of information can be turned on or off, according to the user's preference. So, for example, a Google e-mail user can add a window to display the newest incoming messages on the toolbar.

As Google adds more features to the toolbar, Sterling said, "it circumvents the need to do things on a Microsoft [operating system]."

But Desktop 2 faces some hurdles. With so much software already available, and with threats of spyware and viruses on the Internet, many consumers are weary of downloading additional software, Sterling said.

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